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by Walli F. Leff. The fact is that brutal military and paramilitary troops in El Salvador have been shooting patients on the operating table and kidnapping and torturing doctors and nurses since the coup in 1979. Just another violation of human rights about which the U.S. government keeps quiet.

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On The Cover: Photo by Johnny Rozsa.

Insights

Tom, Ira & The City Budget

It is hard to find an agency of government that isn't having its budget slashed these days, but the butchering of the Los Angeles City Attorney's special operations unit— it prosecutes consumer cheats, rent-gouging landlords and people who pour toxic wastes down city sewers — deserves special mention. Under Mayor Bradley's 1982 super-austerity budget, the unit, which has won statewide recognition for its efforts against those who poison us for fun and profit, will suffer a staggering 67 percent cut in its manpower. The consumer protection section, for example, is slated to lose five of its six attorneys. The sixth is presumably being left on payroll to offer the city's regrets to any complaining consumers.

Just why the Mayor's financial wizards felt compelled to gut one of the few agencies of city government that comes close to paying for its own upkeep — fines generated from the settlement of civil suits equal the dollar amount to be saved by proposed cuts — is one of the minor mysteries puzzling City Hall insiders. While the cuts are explainable as just another dreary example of political influence having concrete payoffs — environment polluters *have* been known to make campaign contributions, you understand — a favored explanation among the City Attorney staffers involves that office's putative new chief, City Controller Ira Reiner, who is currently leading Bob Ronka in the run-off election for the job scheduled for June 8. The scuttlebutt among staffers is that Bradley's office saw a good chance to cripple the headline-grabbing Reiner before he was ever sworn in, since the special operations unit is a hands-down favorite winner when it comes to generating favorable publicity for whoever holds the City Attorney's title. Mayor Tom, you may remember, is less than enamored by Ira's wave-making shenanigans concerning junketing city officials and bloated expense accounts.

In response to this scenario, the Mayor's office issued a heartfelt *Heavens, No!* and went on to point out that the Mayor's budget will require a 15 percent cut in all city agencies. The Mayor's spokesperson also noted the City Attorney's staff will be increased a bit in order to more adequately staff the court system — the CA prosecutes drunk drivers and non-felony criminal cases — a task mandated by the city charter, which makes no mention of consumer fraud, etc. Another knock on the Bradley-Reiner angle is that it presumes a degree of forethought not previously noted in our esteemed Mayor.

Whatever the reason behind the special unit's emasculation, all budget items are up this week before the City Council, which has the power to restore some of the staff positions lost by the cuts. But nobody's betting their weekly salary that any such salvage operation will occur. So if you eat, breathe air or drink water and live in Los Angeles, best indulge yourself quickly.

Ira Reiner: defused?

Pretend This Is Page 2

Personally, we don't believe a word of it, but that notorious Washington gossip column "The Ear" reported last week — so we're told, we never read afternoon newspapers — that the *Herald-Examiner*'s chief blue-pencil wielder, Jim Bellows, was back in D.C. and interviewed none other than Janet Cooke for a job with The Minnow. You remember Janet — she wrote a charming profile of an eight-year-old junkie that contained just the teensy-weensiest of errors. Well, we called up Jim and he denies ever talking to Janet and personally we see no reason not to take the poor man's word for it. Still, we figured we might as well print the unfounded rumor, just on the outside possibility that it's true. Besides, it makes us look cute.

Laid-Back Smog Jobs

One of the major issues raised by the *Weekly*'s "inside smog" series last year was the thoroughness of pollution inspections at the city's industrial plants. We concluded that the regional Air Quality Management District's 80 inspectors weren't exactly over-extending themselves, and suggested this was one of many factors responsible for the city's deteriorating smog situation. Now confirmation has come from the agency itself, which recently hired a private security firm to do some undercover sleuthing as part of a sweeping reform of its enforcement division. For three weeks, gumshoes in unmarked cars tracked certain smog inspectors on their daily rounds, and allegedly found that at least two District veterans were nowhere near the sites from which they filed radio reports. In fact, they weren't inspecting anything at all. The two have been suspended pending a termination hearing, and meanwhile the investigation has spread into the division's supervisory echelons, since someone there was apparently filing false written reports to cover the inspectors' false radio reports. The investigation continues, says District chief spokesman Jim Birakos, and more disciplinary actions are to be expected. One ironic note: last October, we quoted a smog inspector joking that his job was so laid back he could take on another and nobody would be any the wiser; sure enough, one of the men snared in the current investigation turned out to be doing two jobs at once.

Addenda & Errata

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In an advertisement that appeared in the May 1-7 issue for the Pretenders' album, available at Music Plus, we incorrectly gave the wrong price, listing a sale price of $3.99. This was our error, and we regret any inconvenience to readers.

We also apologize for omitting the name of Bill Stein Kellner in our Pee Wee Herman story last week. Kellner is co-director, co-writing supervisor and co-writer of *The Pee Wee Herman Show.*

Also in the same issue, the L.A. Dee Da column carried an item on the controversial firing of Richard Meltzer by KPFK. The item gave the impression that Meltzer was bounced from the air because of one scatological remark. KPFK says it pulled the show because it feared FCC license problems because of repeated obscenities by Meltzer, guests and callers on the show. "The program was cancelled because of unwillingness to comply with FCC regulations," the station says.

Finally, we'd like to note that the photographer on the Madonna Man ad in that week's paper was Richard Armstrong.

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